

# Setting up a Behaviour Change Unit in Local Government in the UK

9th November 2022  
Dr Michelle Constable

[www.hertfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk)

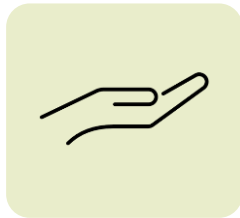


# Why is behavioural science important to local authorities?

- Priorities and aspirations = behaviour?
- Growing national momentum
- Established 2019
- Focus on outcomes for residents/organisation



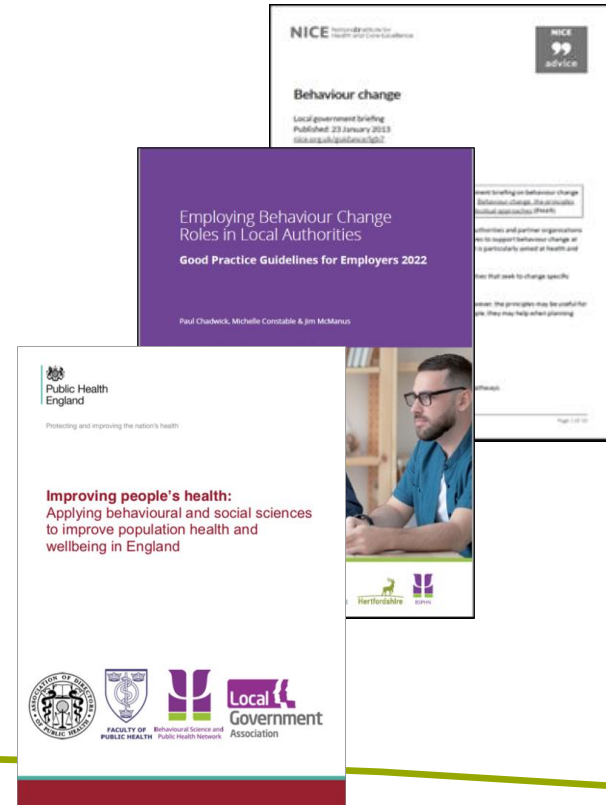
Expertise



Support



Training



# Herts Behaviour Change Unit – our offer




A holistic offer of support for directorates to embed behavioural science in core programmes and services including:

- Access to expertise
- Training in key behavioural science approaches
- Behavioural analysis
- Innovative, behaviourally informed interventions
- Access to key tools and resources
- Support with robust evaluation
- Light touch consultancy and advice



Hertfordshire  
**BEHAVIOUR**  
CHANGE UNIT

# Herts BCU - briefings and recommendations



## Supporting residents with the increased cost-of-living: Behavioural science recommendations for local authorities

**PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER**

This resource was created to provide practical and evidence-based behavioural science recommendations that can help local authorities to support their residents with the significant pressures caused by the increased cost-of-living.

It is designed to complement the significant work that local authorities, voluntary groups and others are doing by showing how behavioural science can add value. A key resource on policy and practical work is the Local Government Association's Cost of Living Hub which can be found here: [Cost of Living Hub | Local Government Association](#).

This paper is composed of two key elements:


- Identification of the groups in society that are most likely to be affected and how the increased cost-of-living will impact on them, thus exacerbating societal and health inequalities.
- Evidence-based advice rooted in the behavioural and social sciences, highlighting what local authorities can do to support their residents. Key recommendations for action and next steps to support residents will be presented.

**THE INCREASE IN THE COST-OF-LIVING**

The rise in living costs is putting significant pressure on households across the UK, replacing COVID-19 as the main concern for many communities (Gironc et al., 2020). People are worried that they will not have enough money to buy food and heat their homes, particularly over the winter period. In response to these issues, people started to change their behaviour and become more conservative with their finances. In July 2022, 50% of adults said they shop less when buying groceries (ONS, 2022). These numbers are likely to continue to grow as costs keep rising. These individual behaviours are likely to have a wider impact on the economy and population health.


Supporting residents with the increased cost-of-living:  
Behavioural science recommendations for local authorities

01






## Wellbeing during challenging times

wellbeing and mental health guide for business support providers, employers and business owners



A guide for Hertfordshire employers - November 2020



## Local Lockdowns: Social distancing and self-isolation

### 8 STEPS to supporting COMPLIANCE & MENTAL HEALTH



- Residents know exactly **WHAT TO DO** and are **CONFIDENT** they can do it
- Residents have access to **MENTAL HEALTH** support and services
- Residents belong to **ESSENTIAL GOODS**, services, and practical support
- Residents are **EMPOWERED** to help themselves
- Residents receive regular, **OPEN COMMUNICATION** from a trusted source
- Residents are **MOTIVATED** to change their behaviour and maintain the changes
- Residents belonging to **VULNERABLE** groups are identified & their specific needs considered
- Residents can socially **CONNECT/ENGAGE** with others

Supporting compliance and mental health

These evidence-informed recommendations are supported by a review of the literature. For a series of full recommendations and guidance on how to achieve this, [click here](#)

# IMPROVING HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE STAFF WELLBEING



# Health and social care staff digital workplace wellbeing offer

## THE PROBLEM:

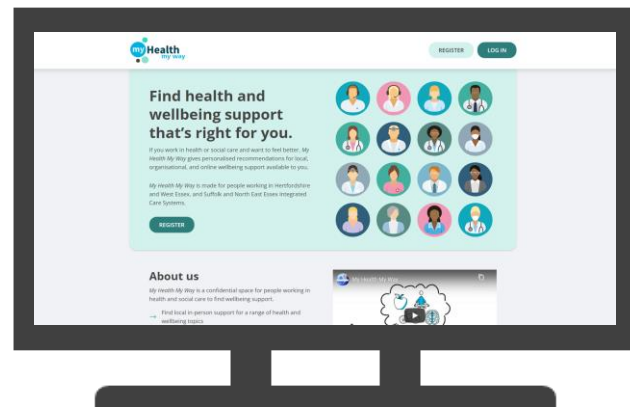
COVID-19 further strained the wellbeing of an already over-burdened health and social care workforce.

HCC were commissioned to develop a digital workplace wellbeing offer to support staff wellbeing recovery post-pandemic.

## THE INTERVENTION:

A website and virtual behavioural coaching service to support staff in adopting healthy lifestyle behaviours.

- Self-monitoring of health and wellbeing
- Signposting to wellbeing services and resources
- Action planning
- Behavioural coaching



# Behaviour Change Techniques for intervention design

The design of the website features was based on Behaviour Change Techniques (BCTs) shown to be effective for changing behaviour (NICE Guidelines). The main BCTs are:



## Goals and planning

- Create behaviour change goals and prioritise actions
- Develop coping plans to manage obstacles



## Feedback and monitoring

- Self-monitoring of behaviour and its outcomes
- Provide feedback on behaviour and its outcomes



## Social support

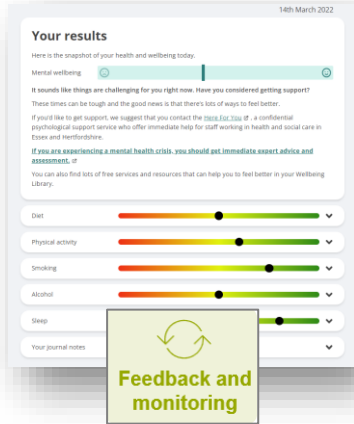
- Advise on and arrange for friends, relatives, colleagues or 'buddies' to provide practical help, emotional support, praise or reward

# Website features



## Wellbeing Log

12-item questionnaire with feedback on different areas of health and wellbeing.



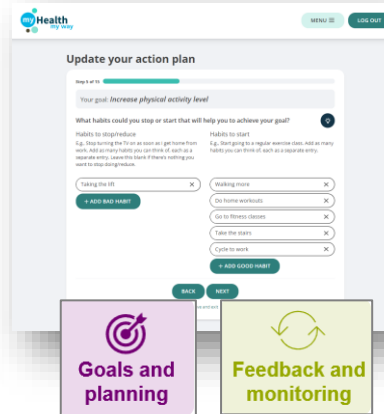
## Wellbeing Library

A repository of wellbeing services and resources that users can filter.



## Action Plan

A guided step-by-step process for users to create a behaviour change plan.



## Behavioural coaching

Up to 4 virtual sessions to support use of website features and provide social support.





# Evaluation

12-week pilot (March – June 2022)

Website and coaching launched to staff from 20 NHS and local authority organisations



## 518 site users

### Google Analytics:



Used the Wellbeing Log

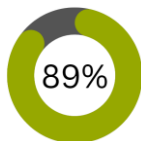
144

Items bookmarked in the Wellbeing Library



Created an action plan

### Survey (N=70):



Strongly agreed/agreed that the Log made them more aware of health and wellbeing risks.



Found out about or accessed wellbeing services through the Library

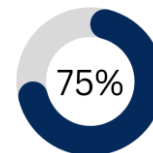


Stated that the action plan motivated them to achieve their goal to a moderate or large extent.

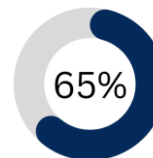


## 54 received coaching

### Survey (NB only N=20 at time of analysis):



Stated that coaching helped them change their lifestyle behaviours to a moderate or large extent.



Were very satisfied (40%) or satisfied (25%) with what they achieved through coaching.

# Qualitative user feedback



*“I was really struggling and now I feel much more positive. **My perspective has changed.** I’m going to put myself first for a while and ask my family and friends to support me. **The website is going to be very useful to create my plan and monitor its progress.**”*

*“The coaching sessions were really good and gave me a real benefit to my work, **improving both my confidence and competence.**”*

*“**I felt empowered** to make positive change. It was an opportunity to embrace opportunity and feel excited for the future, with **prompts and encouragement, plus accountability** from the coach.”*

*“With your help the service has enabled me to move forward, even when I fall **I have gained the skills to pick myself up and try again.**”*

# Next steps...



The website and coaching remain accessible to staff from the 20 NHS and local authority organisations.



We now have ~850 site users and 110 coaching clients.



Report with updated statistics of site usage and survey results underway.



Currently implementing small site improvements and newsletter functionality to promote engagement.



Website and coaching to move into business-as-usual March 2023 as part of organisations' wellbeing offer.

# References

- Hertfordshire BCU papers and resources: [Behavioural science resources for professionals | Hertfordshire County Council](#)
- NICE Guidance PH6 Behaviour Change General Approches (2007) <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph6>
- NICE Guidance PH49 Behaviour Change Individual Approaches (2014) <https://www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/PH49>
- PHE Behavioural and Social Sciences Strategy – Improving People’s Health:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-peoples-health-applying-behavioural-and-social-sciences>
- Employing Behaviour Change Roles in Local Authorities – Good Practice Guidelines for Employers 2022:  
<https://www.bsphn.org.uk/784/Tools-Resources-for-Professionals>

# thank you

michelle.constable@hertfordshire.gov.uk

[www.hertfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk)

